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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 8666
INFO RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE
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RUEHWR/AMEMBASSY WARSAW 0235
RUEHCD/AMCONSUL CIUDAD JUAREZ 0215
RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL 0216
RUEHSO/AMCONSUL SAO PAULO 0218
RUFOADA/JAC MOLESWORTH AFB UK
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC
RUCPDOC/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHDC
RHEBAAA/DEPT OF ENERGY WASHINGTON DC
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 LAGOS 000217

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

STATE FOR AF/W, INR/AA, DS/IP/AF, DS/ICI/PII, DS/DSS/OSAC
ZAGREB FOR AMBASSADOR BRADTKE
WARSAW FOR LISA PIASCIK
CIUDAD JUAREZ FOR DONNA BLAIR
ISTANBUL FOR TASHAWNA SMITH
SAO PAULO FOR ANDREW WITHERSPOON
DOE FOR GPERSON, CAROLYN GAY
TREASURY FOR ASEVERENS, SRENENDER, DFIELDS
COMMERCE FOR KBURRESS
STATE PASS USTR FOR ASST USTR FLISER
STATE PASS TRANSPORTATION FOR MARAD
STATE PASS OPIC FOR ZHAN AND MSTUCKART
STATE PASS TDA FOR NCABOT
STATE PASS EXIM FOR JRICHTER
STATE PASS USAID FOR GWEYNAND AND SLAWAETZ

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/22/2017

TAGS: NI PGOV PREL PTER

SUBJECT: EXPECT POLITICIANS TO HIRE ARMED GROUPS

REF: LAGOS 198

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Classified By: Consul General Brian L. Browne for reasons 1.4 (B) and (D)

11. (C) Summary: Some armed groups in Rivers State are for hire this election season; Ateke Tom's group will be employed by Governor Peter Odili while Soboma George will be employed by opposition groups, says Miabiye Kuromiema, Rivers indigene and former Secretary General of the Ijaw Youth Council. Bayelsa State People's Democratic Party (PDP) gubernatorial candidate Chief Timipre Sylva's adoption of Governor Jonathan's policies will calm that state; however, militants said they would hold hostages until jailed militant leader Dokubo Asari is released. Agip has agreed to send 150 Niger Delta youths to Italy to receive skills training so they can become gainfully employed. End Summary.

Delta Youths Unlikely To Be Used by Politicians: Kuromiema

12. (C) The ethnic and political scene in Warri, Delta State, is complicated, Miabiye Kuromiema, former Secretary General of the Ijaw Youth Council (IYC) and well-connected Niger Delta indigene, told Poloff March 8. Previously a Vice President Atiku acolyte, Governor James Ibori regained President Obasanjo's favor by funding the third term agenda;

Kuromiema believes this turn in presidential favor helped secure the People's Democratic Party (PDP) governorship ticket for Emmanuel Uduaghan, Ibori's cousin, thereby protecting Ibori from an unfriendly successor. Further, Ibori worked with Governor Bukola Saraki of Kwara State to push Katsina State Governor Umaru Yar'Adua's appointment as the PDP flag bearer against Governor Peter Odili of Rivers State. Kuromiema speculated Ibori's support for Obasanjo has turned a few PDP heavyweights against him and his favored Uduaghan.

¶ 13. (C) Divided support for Uduaghan within the national and state PDP has created an opportunity for Ijaw Chief Edwin Clark to rail against the Governor's administration. Clark's move against Ibori and Uduaghan not only took advantage of discord within the PDP but also among militant Ijaw groups in the Delta, Kuromiema theorized. One group of militants is clamoring for the release of militant leader Dokubo Asari while another seeks the release of Diepreye Alamieyseigha, former Governor of Bayelsa State jailed on money laundering charges. The Gbaramatu youths located near Chevron's Escravos installation in Delta, numbering approximately 500, are well disciplined because they grew up in a state of war and therefore know the power of guns. Kuromiema does not expect them to be easily used for political violence but does think they will publicly demand elections be held, although they will not likely vote, he said.

Rivers Youths for Hire

¶ 14. (C) On the other hand, criminally-minded youths and militants for hire make Rivers a delicate state, Kuromiema said. Kuromiema's greatest concern going into the elections is that Odili, or an Odili oppositionist either within or

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outside the PDP, would seek to disrupt the elections to install a chosen candidate. Kuromiema described Rivers State PDP gubernatorial candidate Celestine Omehia as a "nice guy" but felt he would be unable to pull away from Governor Peter Odili's political and financial campaign machinery. Kuromiema suggested a military cordon around Port Harcourt to keep militants out of that city in order to lessen political violence. Kuromiema said Rivers militant leader Ateke Tom's group would most likely be hired by Odili while Soboma George's group, which had split from Tom's, would be hired by the opposition.

Sylva Expected to Continue Jonathan's Policies

¶ 15. (C) Bayelsa State gubernatorial candidate Chief Timipre Sylva will not deviate from Governor Jonathan's Bayelsa Partnership Initiative (BPI) development plan for the state and may in fact strengthen it, Kuromiema commented. Sylva has no control over his election machinery, is dependent on his predecessor's, and does not have a well articulated agenda. Sylva's dependency upon Jonathan leads Kuromiema to expect that he will also follow Jonathan's policies and development efforts which, he noted, are "more promising than others".

Militants: Expect Hostages Until Asari Is Released

¶ 16. (C) The Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force (NDPVF) jailed militant leader Dokubo Asari warned President Obasanjo, during one of the President's visits to Asari in prison in late 2006, that thousands of youths would be ready to join the NDPVF and lead the militants if the President continued to ignore the Delta. Needless to say, Obasanjo did not take this threat well and departed Asari's cell in bad

spirits, Kuromiema said. Asari's NDPVF followers claimed responsibility for kidnapping four Agip employees on December 7; the last two Italian hostages were released March 14.

¶7. (C) However, when Kuromiema asked the kidnappers about releasing the hostages during a February conversation, he was told "please do not ask for something we cannot do" because unlike in other kidnappings, these hostages would not be released until Asari was. (Note: Following the March 14 release of the Italians, statements attributed to the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) warned that more expatriates would soon be abducted. As with some of the previous kidnappings, there is conflicting evidence whether the perpetrators were MEND or members of another group such as Asari's NDPVF, or whether in this instance it does not make much of a difference. (Reftel) End Note.) Kuromiema saw no reason to keep Asari in jail as he no longer poses a threat to President Obasanjo and because his release would remove the political impetus driving militants to take hostages.

¶8. (C) However, Kuromiema admitted releasing Asari would not stop violence during the elections because someone is always willing to take money. Despite this, Kuromiema was positive the Niger Delta would slowly improve, "day by day," but warned one should not expect long-term development plans from

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political candidates.

Agip to Send 150 Youths to Italy for Technical Training

¶9. (C) Kuromiema and civil society groups, including Social Action, Environmental Rights Action, and the Ijaw Council on Human Rights, discussed with the Minister of Petroleum, Mr. Edmund Daukoru, ways to develop the Niger Delta. The Minister recommended they register a Human Capital Group that could serve as an intermediary between youths/communities and companies such as Agip, who have reportedly expressed interest in capacity building and fostering more positive relations with Niger Delta youths. Kuromiema said Social Action, Environmental Rights Action, the Ijaw Council on Human Rights, and other civil society groups subsequently formed a Human Capital Group and issued to Agip a proposal to provide technical training to Niger Delta youths so they could become gainfully employed.

¶10. (C) In early March, Agip agreed to send 150 youths to Italy to receive technical training; they are now awaiting further details, according to Kuromiema. He expects this program to be more successful than nonviolence trainings which "give skills but not food." Kuromiema commented Minister Daukoru from Bayelsa State is engaged with Agip on this program and is taking care to prevent anyone but himself from using the program to make political points. The group will primarily consist of Ijaw militants from Rivers, Bayelsa and Delta. If this program proves successful, Kuromiema would like to present it to other multinationals.

Comment

¶11. (C) Kuromiema's analysis of Delta, Bayelsa and Rivers tracks well with comments other interlocutors have made. As many have observed, criminal motivations may tend to be a more dominant factor in the conduct of the groups operating in Rivers State, while groups in Delta State and Bayelsa seem to be articulating more political objectives. End Comment.

BROWNE